Students Opinion on the Values of Intercultural Education as Education for Future in Primary School

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Abstract: Intercultural education is an education of interpersonal relationships, which involves members of different cultures, whose fundamental objective is to increase the effectiveness of intercultural relations, to increase the degree of openness, tolerance, acceptance of others. The integration of intercultural education in the school space is a complex and not at all easy process, which requires specific skills and approaches from teachers. Pupils, from the earliest ages, namely, primary schools, should be able to appreciate the richness of a diverse range of cultures and be helped in practical ways to recognize and challenge stereotypes. Wherever prejudice and discrimination exist, they must be addressed. The following article, presents brief research on the opinions and experience of Preschool and primary school students from Aurel Vlaicu University of Arad, regarding the values of intercultural education teaching and practice within primary schools, in the Romanian school curriculum, in order to integrate the pupil in the society of the future. They have shared their thoughts regarding the preparation level that they get in the study years at the above-mentioned specialty, through data collected within several sessions of focus groups.

Keywords: *primary school; intercultural; curriculum; values; experience.*

Introduction

Education's purpose, through formal educational institutions, is to create and implement educational policies at all levels, in a peaceful and friendly environment for all pupils and students, that can promote the values on which the above-mentioned educational policies are constructed. However, the role of formal educational institutions can be analyzed at a closer level from the standpoint of new educations, in which intercultural education and instruction belong. The most important role of the school is to create learning situations based on dialogue, and in this role, formal educational institutions must undertake clear actions in order to apply the basics of intercultural education, as part of new educations. These essentially mean preparing students to communicate at all times, both as interactive teaching learning methods and as independent goals of education of postmodern era. Dialogue must be used not only in the classroom but also between students, community and school.

When we hear the term "multicultural school," we may imagine that people from various cultures meet there, or that the institution implements multicultural education to some extent. The former expresses the school's appearance of multiculturalism, that is, the many cultures of society, which does not always go hand in hand with the use of a multicultural educational approach. This, in turn, implies that the multicultural school promotes multicultural education. According to the latter approach, we discuss the multicultural school in our chapter. At the same time, we cannot avoid providing a conceptual definition and brief presentation of multicultural education, as well as interpreting its connections to specific educational issues (Marginson & Sawir, 2011).

Simultaneously, the concept of intercultural education was more widely used in Europe in the past, and it referred to educational efforts to prevent assimilation of immigrant minorities while facilitating their integration. The use of the concept of multicultural education was originally an American pedagogical feature, and it is associated with the African American civil rights movement. In terms of content, the definitions define multicultural education as an educational policy strategy or concept, as well as a pedagogical toolkit that promotes a student's school and social integration in a minority situation. The concept also emerges as a pedagogical approach that pervades schoolwork as a whole, thereby assisting integration intentions (Buchs & Maradan, 2021).

A formal education that spans two or more cultures is usually referred to as multicultural education. It aims to teach students how to

manage the diversity and diversity they will encounter in the international community, as well as to develop cognitive, verbal, and nonverbal skills that will enable them to collaborate with people from different cultures and cultural groups. Cultural differences and human conditions in society must be taught in multicultural education, and opportunities for cultural pluralism and tolerance development must be created. This can be greatly aided by an institutional environment that recognizes and represents cultural diversity, which can also improve student motivation.

In most inter-group conflicts, intercultural education can prevent the marginalization of certain groups, the formation of prejudices, and the direct encounter of several cultures. Neglect and rejection of foreign cultures can also be eliminated by passing on knowledge about different cultures. However, having approximate knowledge is insufficient; the student must receive accurate, reliable knowledge from his or her teachers and environment, upon which he or she can later build acceptance of the foreign culture. Passive acceptance is the foundation for curiosity and motivation to learn about the given area, people, language, and culture.

One of the most important elements of application of intercultural education, which is the educator, is located on the limit between the interests of the formal institution and the needs and interest of pupils and their thinking. The teacher's role in assisting students in internalizing the basic elements of this kind of education is critical, but the meaning of it is dependent on the type of teaching and learning methods that the teachers use. In the case of the traditional teaching learning systems and institutions, it is imposed for the teachers to adopt a different attitude, which can be one of omniscience and only transmitter of information, placing the teacher above the student. The last one mentioned above, is relegated to the passive role of receiver of unquestionable knowledge. This type of teacher-student interaction is most common in traditional transmission pedagogy. The latter is relegated to the passive role of receiver of unquestionable knowledge. It is obvious that in a situation where he is part of discrimination and aggressive situations, his reaction to the culture he comes from and its reflection, can have negative consequences, due to inferiority complexes internalized as a result of the discrimination suffered (Gannon, 2002).

Parents are one final factor that can play an important role in intercultural education. They play an important role in shaping children's beliefs and attitudes, and as such, they can have an impact on the skills that students learn in intercultural education courses, either positively or negatively. Parental stereotypes are transmissible to children and can be difficult to remove when they are reintroduced into the family environment

after being broken down in intercultural education courses. Then there's the internal conflict of the educable, who is often given a set of laws and rules for assessing the reality of its own environment from home, and the school and intercultural education activities try to clear these received pictures of mind and stereotypes. The main value of intercultural education becomes harder and harder to achieve, and it becomes clear that the operations within intercultural education are heavily impacted by the social situations in which they appear. Actually, all of the elements discussed here, are influenced by the place they appear in, socially speaking (Gannon et al., 2002).

Theoretical foundation

With the education of immigrant children in Western European societies, intercultural education has made its mark on Europe's political agenda. For the first time, it was realized that the existence of groups with a different cultural background than the majority population could pose a problem. The difference is perceived and treated as a country in this first stage of intercultural education. Then comes the stage in which immigrant children are granted the right to attend classes in their native languages, cultures, and religions, but outside of the formal education system and any intercultural dialogue with adult students. In the third stage, which is the current paradigm of intercultural education, difference is viewed as a source of wealth, and intercultural dialogue is encouraged, between different social groups (Ciolan, 2000).

Thus defined, the notion of culture implies the existence of a plurality of cultures and must thus be understood as a cultural current from the standpoint of relativism. Cultural relativism promotes the idea that different cultures are equal in terms of intrinsic value and discourages any attempt to declare one culture superior or inferior to others. A culture's values, norms, and symbols must be evaluated in their context and functionality, not according to the criteria of other cultures (Cozma, 2001).

Today's European societies, plural from an ethnic and cultural point of view, but also from the perspective of identities and interests, are the arena of coexistence together with more and more obvious and more vocal alterities. In these conditions, it is imperative that the generations in the process of socialization learn basic skills that allow a peaceful coexistence with groups that claim the difference, be it ethnic, identity, cultural or interests (Nedelcu, 2004).

Intercultural education occurs naturally as a result of the 'hidden curriculum' of the child's social and visual environment. While this is the case, it is both possible and necessary to include intercultural elements in the

formal curriculum, at the earliest ages possible. The resources that surround the child are also important. It is critical to investigate the hidden curriculum, to recognize that what is missing can be just as significant as well as what is present. It is for all children, regardless of ethnicity. Because all of our children will be growing up in a country and world that is becoming increasingly diverse, we must prepare them for that world. Intercultural education is an important part of every child's educational experience, whether the child attends an ethnically diverse school, a predominantly mono-ethnic school, or is from a dominant or minority culture (Cucoş, 2000).

Intercultural education is known as being the result of interaction between different social groups, in terms of religion and culture, and people that speak different languages, who have opposing points of view. This education type is critical for making a point in the reflecting on cultural differences as well as gender, social and economic ones.

The following are the primary goals of intercultural education:

- ➢ underlining the effectiveness of intercultural relationships;
- ➢ permanent growing level of tolerance and acceptance of people that differ from us;
- ➢ teaching pupils to discern, accept, and respect assortment in order to mediate social relationships.

Through sustained and consistent efforts, the values derived from intercultural education are as it follows:

- ➢ tolerance,
- ➢ freedom,
- ➢ openness,
- ➢ acceptance of differences,
- ➢ understanding of diversity,
- ➢ pluralism,
- ➢ cooperation.

These are all built into the personalities of the educated subjects. Intercultural education is a component of the new education that focuses on the aforementioned values. It promotes local community solidarity with the international community (Cozma, 2001).

Intercultural education is defined in the specialty literature as education that prepares people to accept and understand cultures around them, that are embedded in a conventional community and, as a result, to accept evolving in line with these social groups, so that this diversity can

become an aspect augmenting the life of people, at every level: social, economic, individual, religious, and so on. Intercultural education is a developing concept that has been investigated in scientific studies for a long time. Due to an increasing number of students belonging to different cultures, research has focused on identifying means of socio-educational integration (Bernat, 2006; Ercag, 2021).

Intercultural education entails a pedagogical approach to cultural differences, a strategy that takes into account spiritual specificities or others (gender, social or economic differences, etc.), avoiding as much as possible the risks associated with unequal cultural exchanges or, worse, tendencies of cultural dissolution. The intercultural approach is a novel methodology for combining data from psychology, anthropology, social sciences, politics, culture, and history into the evaluation of the educational space, rather than a new science or discipline. Interculturalism necessitates an understanding, consideration, and admiration of one's own culture, as well as respect for others' ethnic cultures based on actual knowledge and arousing of curiosity. Interculturality is a process that occurs at cultural crossroads rather than a goal in and of itself (Herlo, 2018).

Intercultural education is a set of regulations and practices that apply to the entire educational environment, including all of its components, and have a direct impact on cultural knowledge and positive appreciation, while also promoting educational equity and equalizing opportunities (Kylyvnyk et al., 2022).

Romanian theory and practice

At the level of international law, there has been an interest in the role of education in intercultural dialogue since 1966, when the International Convention on Human Rights was signed at the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. Towards the end of the 1990s, in this enlarged European context, the shortcomings of the public policies of some Member States in the application of the principles of intercultural and basic education are also to be found in the fundamental international texts on human rights (Parekh, 1986).

In the year 2007, the Ministry of Education, Research, and Youth issued Order No. 1529, which addressed the issue of cultural diversity for the first time in Romanian education, requiring the inclusion of specific elements related to this issue in both school curricula and curricular documents. The subject of intercultural education was introduced into the secondary school curriculum a year later, during the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue, but only as an optional subject in the School Decision Cur-

riculum. Thus, Order No. 5097 mandates the implementation of intercultural education at the gymnasium level, and the Annex to this order specifies the general and specific competencies, pedagogical contents, and methodological recommendations for the development of the curriculum (***OMECT nr. 1529/18.07.2007).

The first intercultural education project, implemented by IIT, aimed to organize training seminars for teachers working with Roma children. The project, Educating Children in Roma Communities: Training Teachers Working with Roma Children, ran from June 1996 to January 1998. One of the project's goals was to improve relations between the school and the Roma communities. The EURROM project, which aimed to integrate Roma culture into school and extracurricular education between 1998 and 2001.

In the field of formal education, the current context is one in which a monocultural approach and a one-sided perspective on majority history and culture predominate, and references to cultural, ethnic and religious minorities are rare. Speaking in this regard are the materials used in the common core of the compulsory curriculum, especially those related to the subjects: Romanian language and literature and the history of Romanians.

Based on the Framework for Key Competences in European Schools, which establishes the framework within which the eight key competences are visible and can be further developed through the European Schools curriculum, which is supported by its structures and pedagogical and assessment approaches, Aurel Vlaicu University of Arad, has introduced in the learning plan of students from Preschool and Primary school educational specialization, intercultural education subject, from the very first year of study. The framework is intended to guide the outlook of European Schools to the rational application of the eight Key Competences for Lifelong Learning. Since the adoption of the first reference framework in 2006, key competences have become a facet of education policy in EU members at various periods of time and with varying elements. The various perspectives taken in the various European countries, reflect the past of those countries, the extensive education ideology, and the educational constitutions that have already been fixed.

These competencies are as it follows:

- ➢ Reading and writing competence;
- ➢ Speaking in other languages competence;
- ➢ Mathematical competence and competence in science, technology and engineering;
- ➢ Digital competence;

> ➢ Personal, social and learning to learn competence;
> ➢ Civic competence;
> ➢ Entrepreneurship competence;
> ➢ Cultural awareness and cultural expression competence.

Together with the students, we try to prepare in order to offer quality education to future generations, in terms of interculturality in the Romanian primary schools: to raise awareness for other cultures, and to freely express self-culture. During these classes, students understand the basics of intercultural education, the definitions and theories, the main concepts of it, also having the possibility to better know themselves and others from the group by practicing activities. By using different metaphors, students can engage in active learning of values, traditions, actions, thoughts and history of their own and of others. Also, they can enrich their vision, by studying diversity, differences and respect. Also, in term of culture they can develop their skills by studying multiculturality, interculturality and transculturality. Stereotypes, misconceptions and terms such as racism and discrimination are important concepts to be discussed within the classes.

Students can analyze the school books, that pupils learn from in primary schools, in order to try to find some indicators that might lead to intercultural education or at least some aspects of it, even though in primary schools, there is not a specific school curricula or program for this matter.

Within the practical seminars and reflecting activities, students can develop certain competencies in order to create favorable teaching learning spaces for their future pupils, in primary and preschools in term of intercultural education. Also, they can create presentations, by working in different groups, of close or far away cultures or elements from a specific culture, in order to get exposed to different societies and different customs. In the same frame, the assessment of students requires them to prepare intercultural programs for children, on a chosen theme and on a specified time. This way, students are able to connect the theories to the practice.

Research design

The research of the present article was based on the group interview, namely the focus group. The principal instrument used was the focus group interview guide. This instrument was put in application, with the motivation of gathering data regarding the points of view, knowledge and practices of students from Arad County, University of Aurel Vlaicu, on intercultural education values in primary school.

The number of students, future primary school teachers, who participated in the study, was 28. The focus groups with the participation of students were as follows:

• First focus group: 12 students
• Second focus group: 9 students
• The third focus group: 7 students

The focus-group meetings took place in the institution of the University, outside the learning hours. Of the total number of participants in the focus group meetings, 24 were female and 4 were male.

The interview guide contains 17 questions, organized as follows:

• Opening question with the role of building trust between the interviewer and the respondents

• Introductory question that aims to launch the desired topic, namely the formative values of intercultural education

• Transition questions that lead the discussion to the key questions of the discussion

• Key questions regarding intercultural activities, limitations in their approach, strengths and difficulties in adapting the contents to the daily activity in the classroom

• Concluding question intended to highlight the points not touched on in the discussion or to fill in some gaps.

Focus group theme:
Introducing intercultural activities in primary school

Focus group goal:
- identifying future teachers' opinions and feelings regarding the importance of intercultural education and its connected activities
- identifying the way in which intercultural activities can be carried out within the class of students and in primary schools.

The questions used are open, aiming to find out the opinions of the participants about the activities related to intercultural education, valences in the development of transversal and key competencies and opinions related to their adaptation to the current curricular contents. Following the application of this data collection tool, two types of data were obtained: quantitative and qualitative, depending on the type of questions asked.

Objectives of the study
One of the main objectives of the study, was to find out, at what extent students within Aurel Vlaicu University of Arad, specialization: Pre-

school and primary school pedagogy, value intercultural education, in terms of their future careers.

The secondary objective of the study was to find out the level of preparation that the classes of the Faculty of Educational Sciences offer them, in terms of intercultural education, and also the level in which they have developed intercultural competences and openness towards other cultures, at micro or even macro level.

The participants were randomly chosen, because if they would participate on the *desire* criteria, the results of the study could have been altered. The qualitative data that has been collected in the period of 10.10.2021 and 31.01.2022, was supposed to analysis immediately.

Methodology

This method was used in order to know the real situation regarding the perception of students regarding intercultural education, its value in the development of key competencies, as well as aspects regarding the design of some intercultural projects that could develop the same competences to primary school pupils. The information obtained in this way helped to identify the problem, from the point of view of qualitative research. It is useful because it is carried out on a small number of respondents and shows a deeper picture of the topic being discussed.

This focus group interview was addressed to students from the Faculty of Educational Sciences, specialization Primary and Preschool Pedagogy, from University of Aurel Vlaicu of Arad, in the academic year 2021-2022. The main purpose of the semi-structured interview was to identify the perception of students towards the values that they attribute to learning and teaching intercultural education. Following the analysis of the data, the following were found: some clear directions can be distinguished regarding the perception of students about the topic discussed above.

The purpose of these meetings was to obtain relevant information on how intercultural education and its activities are carried out in formal education classes, whether they exist or not in the scholar curriculum of primary schools in Romania, what is the opinion of the interviewed students about this issue, their knowledge, opinion and values about the concept and especially the difficulties that may arise in the desire to implement intercultural activities in the daily routines of primary school pupils. Also, it has questioned whether the preparation students receive at the University courses, help them achieve these competences and to pass it on. The answers collected show a situation that we partially expected, namely that the students have an overview of the given topic, but a vague position, which

probably comes from lack of training in this regard in the pre-university schooling system.

Research findings

The interview began with a general question: *If the day became 26 hours, what would you do in the 2 hours you earned? Describe in a few words.* This question was necessary because most students claim that they always run out of time, and fail to put into practice with the class all the content that appears in the program. Their responses were largely related to preparation for the day, planning and design. A small number of participants said they would spend their time on their own personal development.

The second question was: *What information do you currently have about the concept of intercultural education?* Unfortunately, a large number of students responded with a definition and not with personal meanings on the given topic. Another part of the respondents formulated answers to which one could observe the personal imprint and not a definition learned or copied. Unfortunately, some respondents' personal views on the concept are far from real. Thus, some students see intercultural education as a type of new education, from a totally different sphere from what is practiced in the classroom, not knowing its benefits or even the multiple ways of application. In our opinion, the practice of intercultural education should not be limited to such preconceptions. This approach reflects a de-accountability of students, placing the entire task on the non-formal or informal area, where parents or other institutions become pillars responsible for applying it.

The next question was: *In the classroom, how important do you think intercultural activities are? Argue.* The answer to this question clearly delimits the position of each respondent student to the issue under discussion. The argumentative part can strengthen the answer, or on the contrary, invalidate it. Most respondents consider it to be important, arguing especially for its social benefits. There were four respondents who considered that it is relevant only in terms of the communicational benefits it offers to those involved. This answer is considered incomplete, because they responded out of ignorance, using only general knowledge and not their own experience related to intercultural education. A number of seven respondents believe that the benefits of intercultural education go beyond the communication and socializing development barriers of the pupils involved and also discover cognitive benefits, or in terms of knowledge and content. We would have considered strong arguments those related to the development of transversal skills and some intercultural competences, necessary at every age level.

However, we appreciate these views as correct, in terms of the importance of intercultural education.

The next question of the focus group was to form an image of the ways in which respondents stimulate the development of intercultural skills. Unfortunately, the answers provided were not what we expected, namely that the students in the working group are not concerned with developing intercultural skills, but consider only the key competencies they claim to develop through teaching learning process, and the presentation of the compulsory contents, specified in the programs and curriculum. Most of the participants did not even master the significance of the concept of intercultural competence, which raises a series of secondary questions related to the reality of Romanian education and its conformity with the requirements of the modern world and society. Most of the participants who knew the concept, had a distorted, unclear, unrealistic image on the concept of competence in general, and especially on that of intercultural competence. Most consider that an intercultural competence is the communication and socialization of students in different environments. This answer is not at all what we expected, given the variety of environments in which students participated, their different experience and age. Those who listed practical ways to develop what they considered to be intercultural skills reported examples in principle related to the forms of organization, the design of activities so that pupils can work in smaller groups and so that there is a possibility that they socialize and communicate, trips outside the educational space with the cooperation and involvement of parents.

How do you think intercultural activities influence your daily activities at the university and also at practice hours in preschools? that was the question that followed. Unfortunately, the answers were not as expected. A large number of participants believe that intercultural activities disrupt the smooth running of daily activities in the classroom, even destroying the routine, which is extremely important at any age. A teacher should not rely on these issues, but should rather organize learning activities so as to motivate and test students on a daily basis so that they are eager and able to outdo themselves, discovering new things. Fortunately, there are also students who have responded much closer to the expectations we had in this regard. They consider intercultural education and its activities, positively influences the daily activity in the classroom and at faculty, being even a good way to move from one activity to another, or a good way to study in an integrated manner. Some participants even consider that intercultural activities are suitable for use at any time of the day because it has the role of repairing some problems that may occur during the activities: boredom, routine, lack

of variety, communication issues, self-image and trust, etc. Poor parental information can also be a problem that we have identified at this point. If parents knew more about the concept, they would not put such pressure on teachers, but they could do intercultural activities more often. Knowing these details, we will pay more attention to this fact in the study we are conducting. We believe that these answers contain a lot of useful details that we could only find out using these kinds of activities.

The next question was about the *strengths* that participants consider to have intercultural education. This question is relevant because the strengths of these kind of activities, are in fact the pillars on which each teacher relies in promoting new education types. So, the answers were as expected: unlimited communication and resources, low involvement of teachers and more involvement of students, development of student autonomy, the ability to reflect, socializing benefits, multiple ways to use the activities, ease of putting it into practice, relaxation, detachment from routine. We are happy with some answers, because they show that students, as future primary school teachers, know more about this concept than they did at first glance. This is useful because if the obstacles or prejudices related to intercultural education are put aside, they even realize the multiple benefits that its use brings in the educational instructional process.
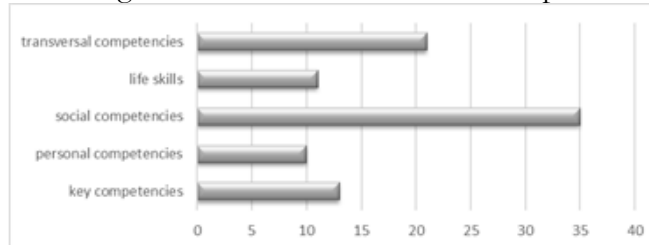
Figure 1. Strengths of intercultural activities according to future teachers
Source: Authors' own conception

The next issue we focused on was identifying and naming the possible *negative effects of intercultural education*. If at first glance the answers all seemed the same, agreeing that intercultural education has no negative effects, a small number of students believe that intercultural activities can have negative effects if they are not carried out by qualified staff or if they are not very well organized and thought out.

What do you think are the steps in such an activity and how often should such activities be included in your daily routine? it is the question by which we try to approach the essence. A large number of respondents consider that the steps are the same as those used in the organization of any instructive educational

activities in the classroom, namely: bibliographic documentation, curricular documentation, homework in accordance with the contents and skills stipulated in the program, according to each age, preparation of materials and resources, preparation and selection of working tools, organization of the place and then the actual activity. I received only one answer related to the evaluation of intercultural activities. These answers are partially correct and we are happy for them, but there are certain elements that have been overlooked. We also expected to receive answers about how to choose the activities according to the needs of the group, how other ethnic groups will be involved, as well as how to train students before engaging in the activities, practical methods of applying the curricular contents, etc. These answers clearly show the incorrect way in which the interviewed students, as future primary school teachers perceive the concept and activities related to intercultural education, and especially actually reflect the reality faced by Romanian education: intercultural activities take place much less often and incompletely than the flow in which some students and teachers state this. Regarding the flow of introductions in the students' routine, they consider that at least once a week or once every two weeks it would be beneficial to organize and involve students in intercultural activities. The answers given show a fairly high availability of them to integrate intercultural activities.

The natural question that would follow is: *Do you think there is an age from which intercultural activities should start? What would that be?* The importance of the discussion on this topic emerges precisely from the answers given by the interviewees. Most respondents stated that there is a certain age at which intercultural activities should be initiated, agreeing with the age of entry into school. Following the discussions, it turned out that the preparatory class is the ideal time to start the instructive-educational activities. This answer worries us, on the one hand, because most respondents consider that real learning experiences start only in school, and preschool is considered by them only a period of accommodation and transition, a period in which instructive educational activities should not be carried out. We consider this completely erroneous, because by consulting the preschool curriculum we can observe exactly the skills meant to be developed right at this level, by using various intercultural activities. We were all the more disappointed with the answers, as the participants were preparing to be primary school teachers, who are supposed to be familiar with these defining elements of the formal educational system. Therefore, we do not agree with the answers received and we consider them as erroneous, because it is considered necessary from the beginning of entering preschool, the involvement of all

educators in as many intercultural activities as possible, in order to understand the world, local community, family and small groups.

The next question arose from those already discussed, after accumulating information about the concept, towards the end of the interview, we want to have an objective opinion about the preferences and desire of future teachers to integrate the method in daily or weekly activities. Of course, their answer does not guarantee that this will be put into practice, as intercultural activities require a lot of preparation, and analyzing the availability of those interviewed, the road from idea to activity is subject to many decisions (Roman & Balaş, 2014). The question was formulated as follows: *Will you use intercultural learning projects in your activity?* The answers were in line with expectations, namely, the future teachers unanimously responded positively, expressing their desire to integrate intercultural activities into the educational routine. These answers make us happy, because the availability of future teachers is high, and their openness to this type of activity shows that there are chances of promulgating intercultural education and related activities in as many educational institutions in Arad County and, why not, in other counties of the country, not just occasionally, but as a weekly routine.

Will you ask for help or will you find out more about intercultural activities after this meeting? This was the penultimate question asked of the key ones we proposed during the focus group meetings. The answers were unanimous. Moreover, following the meetings that took place on this topic, we received numerous requests for student and teacher training in this regard, which shows at least the desire to become familiar with the concept, to know and discover more about the topic. Without generalizing, we can conclude that the student's attention was drawn to this concept, they show their desire to improve in this area, we hope in order to implement it as often as possible in the educational routine of the class. In addition, a few people have stated that they will do so because they want to correct certain mistakes related to the design that they have set or that were transmitted to them incorrectly.

The last question, before launching the key ones, is: *What do you think would be the biggest difficulty in doing these activities with your group and also your future class?* First of all, we wanted to find out what are the difficulties identified by the respondents, namely subjective or objective. Subjective ones can refer to difficulties due to one's personality, availability or beliefs about the concept, and objective ones can refer to external criteria, namely lack of trust or educational resources, problems related to parental availability or even of the school management, the lack of information related to the concept, the lack of practice in this field, the composition of the class, and here we refer to

the availability of children, their desire to participate in activities carried out in this way, etc. The expectations were not deceived, because the respondents chose as difficulties, almost unanimously, the lack of educational resources, lack of literature and also lack of ideas and example projects. Only two people acknowledged that their own person is the biggest obstacle to using intercultural education, namely the lack of willingness to prepare for these activities. Only one person replied that the way she was educated in high school and later in higher education, prevents her from being open in this regard. Unfortunately, this aspect is a difficulty, because in the courses of the undergraduate or master's degree programs, there is only one course in which new education is studied as a discipline, which we consider too little if we analyze the current educational needs. The training of teachers, or rather the lack of their training in the sense of intercultural education and related activities is precarious. From here, an initiative started, to prepare teachers by organizing intercultural workshops, but especially the introduction of the subject in undergraduate or master's programs, in the first phase, in the form of optional discipline. Also, due to the lack of research in this regard in our country, this paper is necessary, and the preparation of a course support or other bibliography that presents both theoretical and practical data, objective, clear and real is a must have.

The last two questions were conceived as closing questions, through which we wanted to establish the last details and conclusions of the focus group interview. The penultimate question of the interview was worded as follows: *If you were to conclude, what would be the three main ideas you would like to highlight at the end of this debate?* leaving it to each respondent to express their own opinions and values related to questions asked, but especially related to the topic of interest. The responses received were as follows:

• intercultural education is a new type of education but also a method of learning and assessment

• it can be used at any age

• curricular content can be replaced to suit this type of education

• modern education is based on the development of key, transversal skills and life skills

• better understanding of itself and the world is one of the many benefits of intercultural education

• intercultural activities positively affect students' activities and their learning outcomes (Roman, 2018)

• there may be some constraints regarding the implementation of intercultural activities

     • the steps through which the intercultural activities are carried out are much more comprehensive than those of carrying out any other activities in the class of students and require a lot of previous preparation and organization

     • the flow of use of intercultural activities deviates from often to very often in the educational routine of students, according to students as future teachers' responses

     • the most numerous acquisitions were observed at the level of key competences, of communication and socialization competences

     • future teachers prefer to use intercultural activities and projects, especially during: *Săptămâna altfel,* because they consider that they would have more freedom to leave the educational institution.

     Following the analysis of the data, the following were found: some clear directions can be distinguished regarding the perception of future teachers related to the educational and learning activities carried out in terms of intercultural education. Also there are significant differences between the students whose level of intercultural studies was higher during Faculty, and those with lower grades and lower participation to classes, regarding the desire of future implementation of intercultural activities in classes.

Table 1. Differences between students' level of intercultural studies during Faculty classes and the learning outcomes and the desire of implementation in the future classes

Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means					95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
Intercultural	Equal variances assumed	,738	,395	21,052	47	**,000**	6,432	,306	5,817	7,046

Equal variances not assumed	20,960	44,214	**,000**	6,432	,307	5,813	7,050

Source: Authors' own conception

The purpose of these meetings was to obtain relevant information on how intercultural activities are carried out in formal education classes, whether they exist or not, what is the opinion of the interviewed teachers about this issue, their knowledge, opinion and opinion about the concept and especially the difficulties that may arise in the desire to implement the activities related to intercultural education in the daily routine of the students of the cycle of fundamental acquisitions. This was done in the hope of high-lighting both the problems faced by teachers who organize such activities and the positive effects found (Coșarbă & Torkos, 2020). The answers collected show a situation that we partially expected, namely that the teachers have an overview of the given topic, but a vague position, which probably comes from lack of training in this regard.

Conclusions

Reporting culture to teaching and learning entails plotting schooling as a project of human being initiation into ethnic worth, as a very challenging process of gaining cultural aids necessary in the social basics of human identity. Intercultural education is one of the most important tools for preparing individuals and societies to be more conscious of the cultural factors in their lives. Intercultural education examines the educational process through the lens of cultural diversity, with an emphasis on the phenomenon of cultural interaction. It has become necessary to provide a practical option for both the preponderance who are preparing for the consolidation of foreigners in multi-ethnic situations and the minority who are aiming to prepare future citizens who are very well integrated in a socio-cultural way, through best choices in their personal lives. Intercultural education results require pragmatic coherence and temporal perspective to expand on civic lifestyles and social interaction that strengthen respect for human rights and responsibility in the exercise of personal freedom (Chiriac & Panciuc, 2015).

Measures in the field of education, aimed at implementing intercultural education, must promote equity and respect for diversity, human rights principles, education to prevent and combat racism, xenophobia, discrimination of any kind, marginalization and social exclusion.

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